

## Historical and Cultural Context

The history of this Tavernier Creek to MM 97 planning area is the culture that created the island community. Limes, tomatoes, pineapples and tropical fruits qualified Tavernier as a farming community in the early 1900's. Hurricane destruction and the advent of Flagler's Railroad resulted in the demise of the farming industry with a corresponding change to a commercial fishing trade in the historical area.

As a result of continued efforts, by local organizations and residents, to maintain the historical resources within Tavernier much of the community remains contextually intact. A historic overlay designation, known as "Historic Tavernier", was established in the planning area with adoption of the 2010 Comprehensive Plan. It is one of the most unique and well-preserved historic communities in unincorporated Monroe County. The community includes a mixture of historic structures located on the ocean side between Coconut Row to the south and just beyond mile marker 92 to the north. Several historical structures within the community are located along U.S. 1 (Overseas Highway) and are currently occupied by commercial uses. A majority of the historic structures are residential homes nestled in the neighborhood that extends behind the commercial area. The purpose of the historic overlay designation was to protect Tavernier's historic resources in accordance with Objective 104 of the Comprehensive Plan. Prior to the designation, the historical homes and businesses located within the area were lost or in danger of being compromised as a result of increased pressure from new development. It is evident that current development in the outer fringes of the historic community does not fit within the context of the community character.

The planning area also consists of an assortment of archaeological and cultural resources. To the south of Tavernier Historic District and on the ocean side is a large parcel of land between Ocean Boulevard and Tavernier Creek Bridge, which is known as Tavernier Creek Hammocks. The Land Authority recently donated the parcel of land to the State of Florida with the intent that it be preserved as a conservation area. Aside from its more apparent environmental qualities, the land holds rich historical, cultural, and possible archaeological resources. The Tavernier Creek Hammocks has indisputable ties to the history of the Upper Keys. According to a local report, the area around Tavernier, like that of much of the Upper Keys, was a thriving community of farmsteads focused on the production of pineapples, tomatoes, and other vegetables which were exported to the mainland. Tavernier was a sparsely populated area with large tracts of land being utilized for cultivation. The Tavernier Creek Hammocks was once one of these thriving farmsteads, which extended behind what is today the Tavernier Town Plaza. After a series of irreparable events in the early 1900's, attention turned towards commercial fishing as a source of income. Tavernier Creek became an essential route between the Atlantic Ocean and the Florida Bay, and a central location to establish business and residence. Tavernier steadily became a thriving multifaceted community that offered an abundance of services and opportunities.

In addition to the farm on the Tavernier Creek Hammock parcel, the site includes a cistern of unknown origin, and the location of an old ball field. The ball field was a popular area for community activity. It was located on the southern end of the property until being relocated adjacent to the Old Tavernier School between 1930 and 1940. The Tavernier Creek Hammocks is sig-

nificant to local heritage and is an attractive location for sustainable improvement in a manner which can enhance social value, spark economic opportunity, provide an educational and recreational resource for residents at a minimal cost while protecting and preserving the integrity of the existing environment.

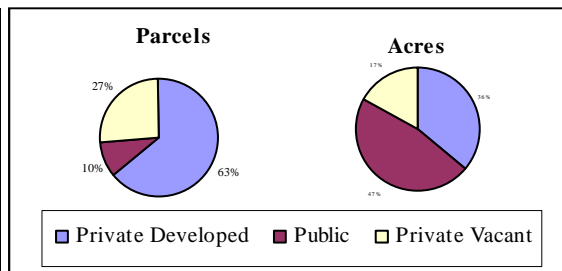
The primary method of protecting resources in the planning area has been through the establishment of a historic overlay, land acquisition, and the designation of historic places and sites. According to a report produced by GAI consultants, fifty-three (53) historical sites have been identified as significant and eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

## Land Use

The planning area contains most of the uses that are needed to support a small thriving community. The residential community is primarily single family and mobile homes, although there are a couple of condominium complexes. Commercial uses are primarily located on U.S. 1 with the largest concentration in the MM 91 to MM 93.5 area. Services and light industrial uses (boat repair, garages, construction companies, etc.) are concentrated bayside in this same general area, although, a mix of uses can be found throughout the U.S. 1 corridor. Water dependent uses such as marinas and boat rentals and water economically enhanced activities such as restaurants and hotels are located on the Florida Bay and Atlantic Ocean.

	Parcels	Acres	Percent of Total
Private Developed	2,912	623	35.8
Public	442	822	47.2
Private Vacant	1,210	295	17.0
Total	4,564	1,740	100.0

Source: Monroe County Planning Department



The Tavernier Creek to MM 97 planning area consists of 1,740 acres divided into 4,564 separate parcels and lots. Six hundred and twenty three acres are developed, leaving 1,117 acres vacant. The majority of this acreage is in public ownership: 822 acres. The remaining vacant 295 acres are in private ownership.

In order to determine the potential for future development in the planning area a vacant land analysis was undertaken using the County Geographical Information System (GIS) and the data from the property appraisers files. The majority of vacant lands in the Tavernier Creek to MM 97 planning area are publicly owned; 822 acres. There is a total of 295 vacant acres in private ownership divided into approximately 1,210 parcels, 660 of which are lots zoned for single family or mobile home construction. Nearly one hundred and seventy (170) of these lots and most of the parcels are in the designated Natural and Conservation area and are slated for acquisition. Part of the four hundred and ninety (490) lots remaining in the planning area may be inappropriate for development because of fragmented hammock areas or wetlands.

Many of the non-residential properties, which appear as undeveloped in the property appraisers data base are currently being used as storage lots or parking for existing businesses. Of the 110 vacant commercial parcels (20 acres) there are only 40 truly available parcels and five of these are in the Natural Resources and Conservation Area. However, a number of the existing sites are under utilized and are ripe for redevelopment.

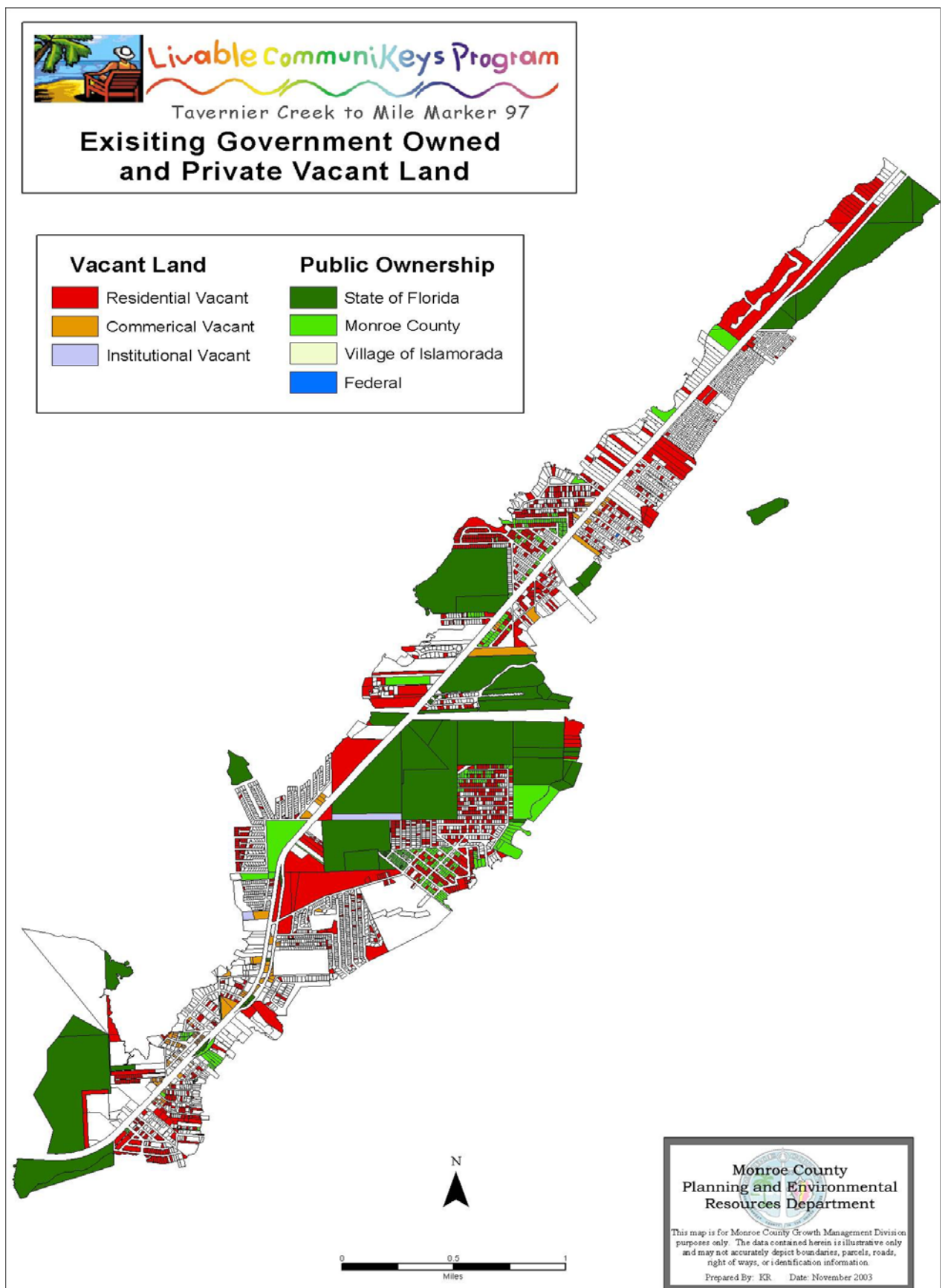


Figure 1.5 Vacant lands within the planning area

## Demographics

The demographic information included in this Master Plan was taken from the 1990 and 2000 Census. The data indicate that the permanent population of the planning area has declined more than ten percent (10%) from a population in 1990 of 4,301 to a population of 3,852. The decrease in population occurred while housing units counted in the Census increased by 235 units, a 7.3% increase. The shift in housing in the planning area is towards more seasonal occupancy (seasonal includes all types of second vacation home uses). In 1990, 998 units or 31% of the planning areas 3,206 housing units were only used on a seasonal basis. In 2000 1,455 units, 42% of the total housing units, were for seasonal use, an increase of 457 seasonal units.

The Census Bureau statistics identified a decrease in the total number of rental units in the planning area in the ten years between 1990 and 2000, from 681 rental units (606 rented, 75 for rent) to 560 rental units (520 rented, 40 for rent) in 2000, a decrease of 121 rental units. This decrease in actual numbers of rental units, even with an increase in the number of total housing units reflects an increase in seasonal/weekend owners. Single family residential homes account for 42% of the residences in the planning area. The remainder of the residential units is multi-family dwellings (4%), condominiums (24%) or mobile homes (30%). The decrease in permanent households and rental units in this planning area of primarily small houses and mobile homes illustrates the problem with the loss of affordable employee housing county-wide.

The planning area's permanent population of 3,852 residents is split evenly between males and females. The numbers of individuals living permanently in the area have decreased for all age groups, with the largest decrease in the 21 to 54 year old age groups (15%). The over 55 age group and the under 20 have decreased by 7.6% and 4.15% respectively.

Table 1.2 Population and housing demographics						
Census Blocks 9706 (1,2,3) and 9707				County		
	1990	2000	Percent Change	1990	2000	Percent Change
Persons	4,301	3,852	-10.4	78,024	79,589	2.0
Male	2,219	1,948	-12.2	40,976	42,327	3.2
Female	2,082	1,904	-8.5	37,048	37,262	0.6
0-20	780	748	-4.1	15,786	15,464	-2.1
21-54	2,055	1,749	-14.9	40,601	42,591	4.7
55-85	1,466	1,355	-7.6	21,637	21,534	-0.5
Households	1,971	1,755	-11.0	33,583	35,086	4.3
House units	3,206	3,441	7.3	46,215	51,617	10.5
Persons per occupied housing unit	2.03	2.19	7.9	2.24	2.23	-0.4
Occupied houses	1,971	1,755	-11.0	33,583	35,086	4.3
Renter occupied	606	520	-14.2	12,729	13,186	3.5
Vacant houses	1,235	1,686	36.5	12,632	16,531	23.6
For rent	75	40	-46.7	2,010	1,663	-20.9
For sale	71	67	-5.6	943	759	-24.2
Not occupied	34	30	-11.8	560	304	-84.2
Seasonal	998	1,455	45.8	7,928	12,628	37.2
Other	57	93	63.2	1,191	1,177	-1.2
Source: U.S. Census 1990 and 2000						

## Population Projections

The permanent population in the planning area is 3,852 residents living in 1,755 households. Future population projections are made for a locality to provide government with the amount and timing of growth for which services and facilities will be needed in the future. Making population projections for the County is difficult. Normally to project future populations the availability of land designated for development is considered along with the rate of development of new homes, the numbers of households, which will result from development and the persons per household. In a planning area such as this, where the permanent population decreased by 10% while housing units increased by 7%, projecting future populations becomes very difficult.

ROGO is the system whereby residential permits are issued in Monroe County. Since 1992 when ROGO was started approximately 70 permits have been issued in the planning area. With more than six hundred lots in the planning area appropriately zoned for development of single family homes and land zoned for commercial uses which can be developed for employee housing there is available land for residential development. The current County and State emphasis on providing housing for the local workforce indicates that there will probably be an increase in allocations for affordable housing. For this projection it is determined that new development over the next twenty years will either continue at the same rate of the last ten years or increase by a maximum of 50% over the next 20 years. Therefore, between 140 and 210 new housing units will be constructed in the Tavernier Creek to MM 97 planning area by the year 2024.

The percentage of permanent housing units of the total will most likely continue at the current percentage (51% permanent households) or decrease over the next 20 years. Using 51% for the calculation results in a projection of 70 to 110 new housing units constructed in the planning area will be for permanent residents. This will increase the permanent population by between 155 and 234 persons if the household size continues to be 2.19 persons per household. The total permanent population will increase to between 4,010 and 4,085 persons. If the percentage of seasonal to permanent units continues to increase at the rate experienced between 1990 and 2000 the number of permanent households will be reduced by 10% and the permanent population will decrease. With the opportunities for providing employee/affordable-housing units in the planning area the potential for maintaining a larger percentage of the additional units as permanent housing has increased.

The County is required by Florida Statutes to plan for and provide adequate public facilities and services to the “functional population”, which is a combination of the permanent, seasonal, and transient populations. By the year 2024, the new housing units constructed in the planning area will require service for an increase in the functional population of between 310 and 460 persons.

## Income

The 2000 Census income statistics for the planning area report that nearly half of the households earn less than \$40,000 annually and 63% earn less than \$50,000. While 3% earn more than \$150,000 annually. In 1990, 75% of the permanent residents earned less than \$50,000 annually. The largest decrease in numbers of households was in the below \$20,000 annual income level, which decreased by 39%. It is impossible to tell from the statistics if this decrease in the lowest income levels is because of improving salaries and total income or if it reflects the change in the population to more seasonal and less rental units.

Based on the 2000 U.S. Census figures, the median income for this planning area's residents is \$42,830, which is comparable to the County median income of \$42,283.

**Table 1.3 Annual Household income for the planning area**

	Census Tract 9706 (1,2,3) & 9707		Monroe County	
	1990	2000	1990	2000
Total Households <sup>1</sup>	1,971	1,755	33,583	35,086
Median Household Income (\$)	30,231	42,830	29,351	42,283
Household Income				
Less than \$20,000	585	355	10,642	7,254
\$20,000 - \$39,999	686	539	11,648	9,057
\$40,000 - \$49,999	212	209	3,406	3,870
\$50,000 - \$74,999	258	292	4,435	6,974
\$75,000 - \$99,999	117	166	1,341	3,632
\$100,000-\$150,000	64	124	1,109	2,411
More than \$150,000	48	70	1,030	1,908
1. Actual total household figures for the planning area are estimates calculated with population demographic data.				
Source: U.S. Census 1990 and 2000				

## Land Acquisition

For many years, the concurrent need for natural resource protection and relief to regulated land-owners has been a recognized problem throughout the Keys. Agencies who are participants and have been intermediaries in the acquisition of some of the sites within the Florida Keys Ecosystem project are The Nature Conservancy, Monroe County Land Authority (MCLA), State of Florida, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and South Florida Water Management District. In the early 1990s a priority acquisition plan that focused on remaining habitat and preservation of wildlife movement corridors was developed. All of these agencies can conduct acquisition activities essentially anywhere within the administrative boundaries that encompass the entire planning area. Their focus in the past has been on natural lands, usually on acreage parcels, that have higher wildlife habitat value.

Acquisition of land through the Florida Keys Ecosystem project includes most of the remaining unprotected Rockland hammocks (tropical hardwood hammocks) in the Keys. It is important habitat to many rare plants and animals and consists of 17 sites in the Upper and Middle Keys encompassing the remaining fragments of unprotected tropical hardwood hammock greater than 12.5 acres. The project includes habitat for migratory birds, the state-threatened white-crowned pigeon and 34 species of rare vascular plants and 34 rare animals. All the project sites are threat-

ened by intense development in the Keys.

Within the Tavernier Creek Bridge to Mile Marker 97 planning area, there are three areas which are part of this project: Dove Creek (498 acres, several large ownership's, remaining subdivided-187 acres acquired through MCLA), Tavernier Creek (83 acres, one major ownership), and Key Largo Narrows (one major ownership-acquired through MCLA).

Additional parcels in public ownership include: the former Ragen Tract (Tavern Towne Hammock); lands near the former Cooke Barrow Pit, Oceanside at Mile Marker 92; the former Unger tracts located ocean side at Mile Marker 94 and bayside at Mile Marker 94.5; the former Richardson tract bayside in Lime Grove Estates at Mile Marker 96; and the former DeCarion/Roberts Tract, also known as Curry Cove, at the Key Largo Narrows, Mile Marker 97 Ocean-side.

In addition to public agency purchase of private property, purchases of private lots have been made by ROGO applicants to garner additional "points" towards an allocation under the county's dwelling unit allocation system. These properties have been deeded to Monroe County.

Publicly owned lands account for 840 acres, nearly 50% of the vacant land in the planning area, and 440 of the 4,565 vacant parcels.

### **Comprehensive Plan Goal 105**

This Comprehensive Plan amendment was designed to refocus land acquisition efforts, conserve natural resources and direct future development to infill areas in coordination with the Livable CommuniKeys Program. The proposed Tier System consists of a set of over-lay maps and regulations directing growth to infill existing subdivisions and commercial areas and identifying those areas, which should be acquired for conservation and density reduction. The System has a major role in the implementation of this Master Plan and the FKCCS. The mapping of the land outside of mainland Monroe County into one of three tiers provides a focus for acquisition and guidance to the public of areas most appropriate for development.

Natural Resource and Conservation Areas (Tier I) are designated to conserve and protect significant environmental habitat and provide for restoration and connection of fragmented habitat patches. Development is severely restricted and the vacant lands are included in County, State and Federal acquisition and conservation boundaries.

Transition Areas (Tier II) are designated to offer an alternative to developing fragmented habitat areas and to help reduce low-density sprawl. Subdivisions in this area are less than fifty percent (50%) built out. These areas are often appropriate for future development but because of the low density are also appropriate for a County density reduction program. This is a cooperative program between existing residents of the area and the County to acquire lots and either sell them back to the neighbors or maintain them as open space. New development is discouraged, but allowed with restrictions in the amount of permitted clearing. The current acquisition program is expanded to include vacant platted subdivision lots in this Tier.

Infill Area (Tier III) is designated for redevelopment and infill of new development. Development is encouraged in these subdivisions that are more than fifty percent (50%) built. Full infrastructure is present or in future plans. Community Centers may be designated and become eligible as receiver sites for Transfer of Development Right (TDR) and corresponding higher density.

The Tier system has been used as a tool in developing this Master Plan to estimate the development potential and amount of land acquisition required in the planning area. The map (Figure 1.6) and table (Table 1.4) present the distribution of parcels under the working draft Tier System in the Tavernier Creek to MM 97 planning area. The actual Tier Maps will be adopted as a zoning overlay after additional refinement.

<b>Table 1.4 Distribution of vacant lands in the proposed Tier system</b>						
	<b>Tier I</b>		<b>Tier II</b>		<b>Tier III</b>	
	<b>Parcels</b>	<b>IS/URM Lots</b>	<b>Parcels</b>	<b>IS/URM Lots</b>	<b>Parcels</b>	<b>IS/URM Lots</b>
Private Vacant Residential	500	170	280	245	275	245
Private Vacant Commercial <sup>1</sup>	6		8		100	
Public Land	400		6		30	
1. 72 of these lots are being used for parking and storage						
Source: Monroe County Planning Department						



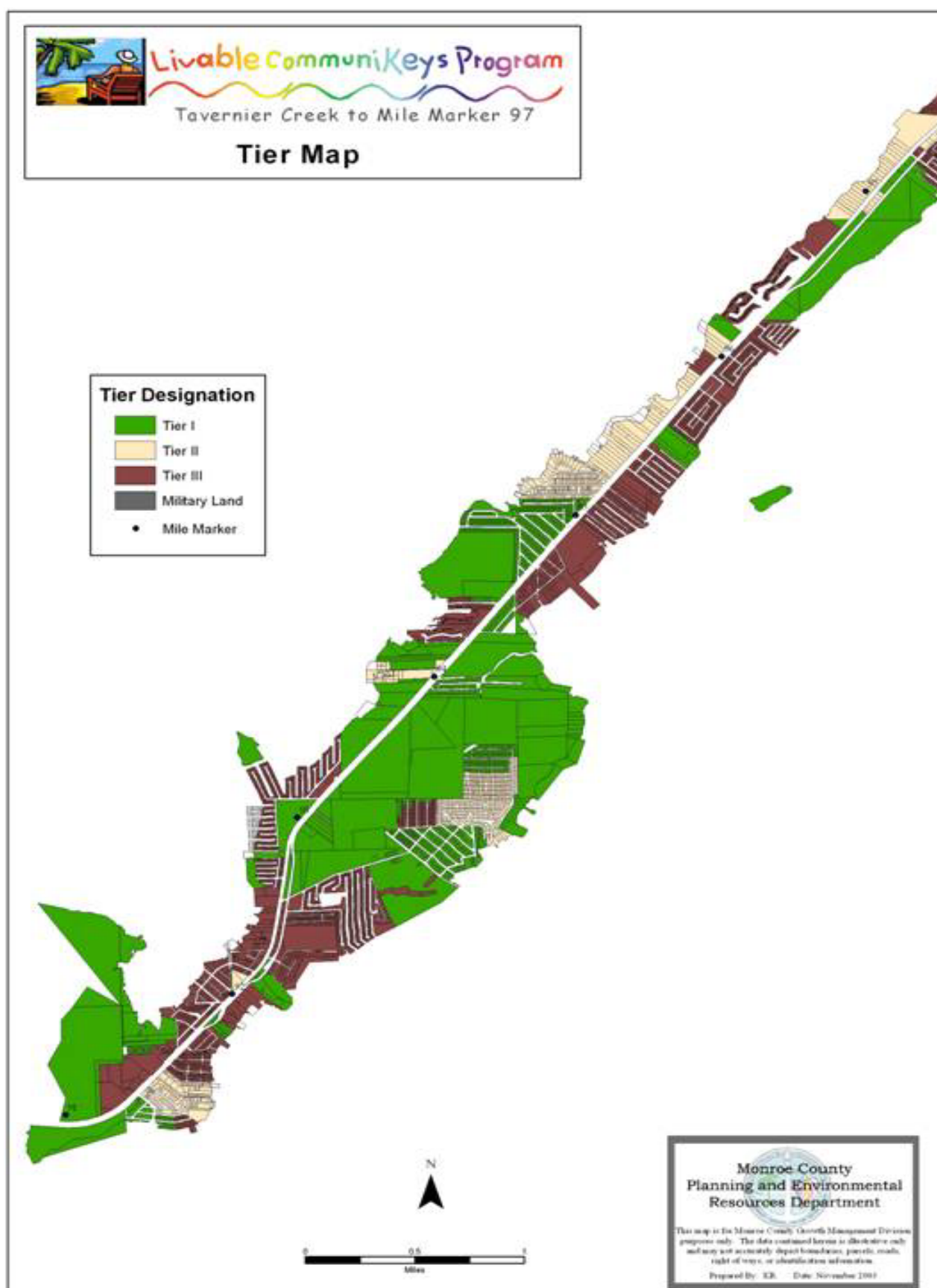


Figure 1.6 Proposed Tier system map.

## Development Context and Constraints

Listed below for reference purposes are the primary existing development constraints from Tavernier Creek Bridge to Mile Marker 97. All of these constraints apply countywide but their particular application to this planning area is discussed below.

ROGO: As of the date of this report, the residential rate of growth ordinance (ROGO) allocates 42 total units (market rate plus affordable) annually to the Upper Keys. Permits for the planning area will continue to be limited and allocated with the rest of the Upper Keys under ROGO. Since the inception of the Rate of Growth Ordinance (ROGO) in 1992, sixty-three permits for new homes, including five affordable houses, have been issued and constructed in the planning area. Three applicants aggregated lots to receive extra points in the ROGO system decreasing the overall potential density. There are currently 17 ROGO applications awaiting allocation awards. Two of the 17 applications have received points for lot aggregation, further reducing the potential units.

Approximately 25% to 30% of the remaining vacant lots are environmentally sensitive and will receive negative environmental points in ROGO and have therefore been avoided by potential ROGO applicants.

NROGO: “NROGO” is the acronym for “Non-residential Rate of Growth Ordinance” under which the construction of new or expanded commercial uses is regulated. The amount of new and expanded commercial space permitted is tied to the level of residential development permitted, which is 239 square feet of commercial space per residential unit allocated. NROGO does not allocate commercial space by Keys sub-area but does so Keys-wide on a semi-annual basis.

To date, there have been no NROGO applications for any projects between Tavernier Creek Bridge and Mile Marker 97.

Florida Keys Carrying Capacity Study (FKCCS): Implementation of the FKCCS is required in the work program in the 2010 Comprehensive Plan. The FKCCS is being used to modify the ROGO and NROGO and this may affect the number and location of residential permits that can be issued in the future county wide.

## Summary of the LCP Planning Process

### *Community Vision*

**We envision the Tavernier Creek Bridge to MM 97 Planning Area as:**

**An island community committed to preserving its heritage, natural setting and stands of native tropical hardwood hammocks, with improvements to the visual character of the U.S. 1 corridor, limited redevelopment of commercial properties, and neighborhoods where residents have access to the water and recreational facilities.**

The community vision was written taking into consideration the responses received from the community at workshops, in the survey of the residents and landowners, and in the U.S. 1 business survey between MM 91 and MM 93.5.

### *LCP Citizen Participation Process*

Three major public workshops and meetings held on March 1, 2001, September 20, 2001, and March 26, 2002 facilitated the LCP planning effort providing an opportunity for direct participation of the community with planning staff and each other. In addition surveys were used to try and gain a broader understanding of the concerns and desires of the members of the community who did not attend the meetings. The survey was included in the second of three newsletters that were mailed to all residents, property owners and interested parties. An additional survey was sent to businesses in the area to gain a better understanding of the issues of importance to the commercial segment of the population. From this outreach, the key community issues were identified and a community vision formulated.

### *Community Issues*

As a result of the many forms of feedback from residents, evaluation of the planning area and analysis of the existing conditions, several issues were identified by the Community:

1. Maintain the existing small town community "island" character of the area.
2. Preserve the remaining significant natural lands.
3. Recognize the uniqueness of and preserve the Tavernier Historic District.
4. Limit additional new commercial development while providing opportunities to redevelop existing commercial structures.
5. Increase opportunities for local community involvement in planning issues.
6. Improve and expand existing water access and provide additional shoreline access for the residents.
7. Protect the existing water-related/dependent uses such as restaurants, marinas, and commercial fishing and permit rebuilding if destroyed in the footprint.

*Planning Issues and Objectives*

From the start of the planning process and throughout the development of the Existing Conditions Report and this Master Plan a number of planning issues and objectives have been identified and considered in the development of this plan. Following in no specific order of importance:

- Reduce impacts on safety and traffic movement from the highway and unlimited access development patterns.
- Provide opportunities for affordable/employee housing for the residents of the community.
- Reduce land use conflicts from non-conformities.
- Provide for flexible building setback and parking standards within the U.S. 1 corridor to reflect the historic development patterns.
- Explore alternative parking solutions for conforming and non-conforming commercial uses.
- Identify and protect existing water dependent uses, both environmental and economic, recognizing that the waters of the Keys are why people want to be here.
- Maintain and increase opportunities for water access for the community.
- Find ways to reduce the impact on the residential community from the large numbers of tourists that travel through the area on U.S. 1.
- Increase the land acquisition program to preserve the remaining high quality hammocks and wetlands in the planning area.
- Work with the neighborhoods in a cooperative effort to purchase hammock areas that create their “sense of place”.
- Preserve the character of historic Tavernier, including the setting and context.

Because many of the planning concerns involved issues specific to the U.S. 1 corridor area, the Planning Department contracted for a Corridor Enhancement Plan which was funded by FDOT. Two public workshops were held specifically to address aesthetic and planning issues within the corridor area from Tavernier Creek to approximately MM 94.5. The first workshop was held on October 23, 2003 with a follow up design and planning workshop on December 4, 2003. Many of the ideas and recommendations which resulted from these workshops and the Tavernier Corridor Enhancement Plan are integrated into the LCP master Plan.

The Livable CommuniKeys Program (LCP) is a community-driven planning effort aimed at determining the amount, type and location of additional development appropriate for the planning area and is directly tied to the Monroe County Year 2010 Comprehensive Plan through adoption by the Board of County Commissioners. The need and budget for community facilities and services are identified to serve the existing community and any growth that may occur. The Monroe County Department of Planning and Environmental Resources have provided the professional guidance and expertise in drafting the plan.

## Format of Master Plan Elements

There are thirteen elements in this Master Plan. Each one focuses on an issue of heightened importance to the Tavernier Creek Bridge to Mile Marker 97 Planning Area. The format for these elements is different from the comprehensive plan because this Master Plan is a culmination of the LCP process, not a starting point. Therefore, the community and planning staff have already reviewed and analyzed much of the available data about the island and they have been through a planning process whereby “problems” (questions, issues and uncertainties) have been identified and needs have been verbalized.

The Master Plan provides the tools for problem solving by fulfilling three basic tasks:

- Statement of the goals of the LCP process as it applies to the planning area.
- Redefined analysis of specific community and planning needs to fulfill the goals.
- Identification of strategies and action to meet the needs.

### Goals

Each element states a specific planning goal designed around the major topics to be addressed through the LCP process such as growth and redevelopment, economic viability, environmental protection, and community character.

### Current Conditions Summary

Information specific to the planning area is available in the Existing Conditions Report. Some information was also provided during the LCP process in newsletters and workshops. Demographics, inventories of community facilities, and land ownership patterns are examples of information presented in this section.

### Analysis of Community Needs

The problem, issue or shortfall in the community or environment and the opportunities are stated here. These have been identified either by the community or by the planning staff. The community includes the affected public, stakeholders, and elected officials and they have identified needs to the planning staff in a variety of ways: workshop participation, mail surveys, meetings, phone calls, and letters. The planning staff identified additional needs either through planning analysis of existing information, professional judgment based on observations of data or conditions, or coordination with facility or service providers.

### Strategies and Action Items

As part of the Master Planning process the planning staff has identified and evaluated possible strategies for meeting each need. The possible strategies were also evaluated relative to one another to identify conflicts and to identify opportunities for one strategy to fulfill multiple needs. In this way a final set of strategies was completed. Action items were then developed towards implementation of each strategy.

The plan is therefore written in the form of goals, strategies and action items rather than goals, objectives and policies as in the Comprehensive Plan. Where strategies and action items replace current comprehensive plan policies, this is noted and action items for deleting or modifying those policies are included in the applicable element. It is very important to note that this plan will be an addendum to the Monroe County Year 2010 Comprehensive Plan and the Comprehensive Plan remains in full effect in the Tavernier Creek to MM 97 planning area.

The plan format is illustrated in the flow chart in Figure 1.7. The flow chart starts with an individual need identified in the plan. A comprehensive strategy for meeting the need is formulated based on the information in hand. If the information in hand is sufficient to implement the strategy the action items for implementation can be written directly into the Master Plan. If not, an action item can be written to procure new information or further analyze existing information. Note that new information not only feeds back into implementation but may reveal new strategies, may redefine the need or may even reveal new needs. To be a meaningful and current implementation tool over the entire twenty-year planning horizon, the Master Plan must include this iterative process of problem solving that monitors success and identifies changing conditions and new issues. It must also allow for timely response and tracking of progress towards problem solving.

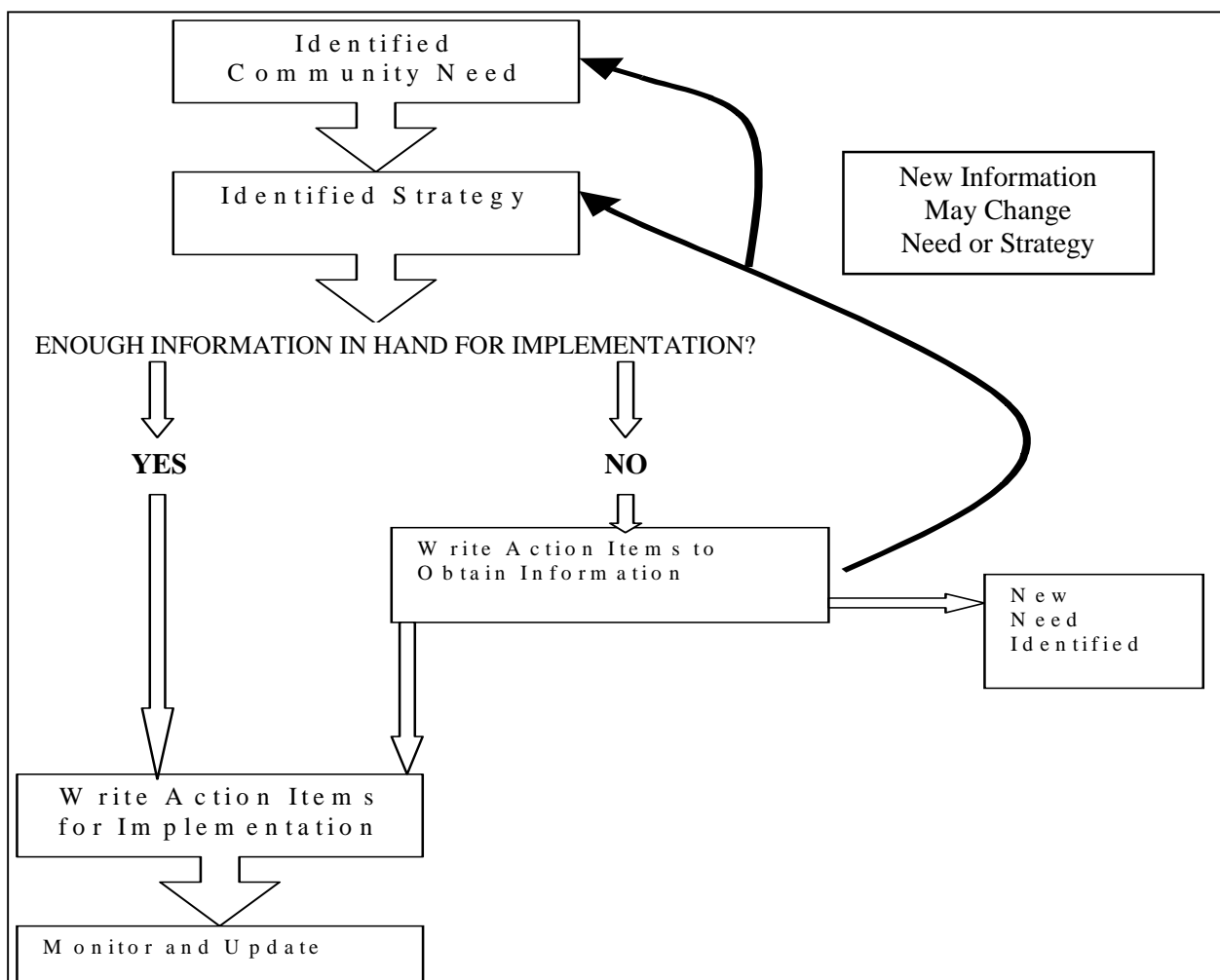


Figure 1.7 Flow chart illustrating Master Plan process.